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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Israeli War against Lebanon,
Syria/Egypt (7/31)

11. Summary: Syrian papers today reported the new Israeli massacre in Qana. Headlines featured President Asad's telephone conversation with Lebanese President Lahoud expressing pain and shock at the crime that Israel has committed against innocent civilians in Qana. President Asad reaffirmed Syria's full solidarity with Lebanon and its complete readiness to offer anything that would assist, strengthen, and support Lebanon against the sinful Israeli aggression. President Lahoud thanked President Asad for his sincere sentiments and expressed Lebanon's appreciation for the efforts that Syria has been making to host tens of thousands of Lebanese who have found in their second country, Syria, their best supporter in times of hardship.

Headlines also cited a telephone call between VP Shara and Lebanese Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Berri in which Al-Shara expressed Syria's solidarity with Lebanon. Prime Minister Muhammad Naji Itri also called Lebanese Prime Minister Fu'ad al-Saniora and expressed strong condemnation of Israeli crimes in Lebanon. Itri renewed Syria's full solidarity with Lebanon and its readiness to offer all the assistance it needs. Foreign Minister Walid al-Mu'allim telephoned Lebanese Foreign Minister Fawzi Sallukh expressing strong condemnation of the massacres that Israel is committing against the Lebanese people, mainly the new Qana massacre. Al-Mu'allim also stressed Syria's full solidarity with Lebanon against the Israeli aggression.

Papers also reported phone contacts by Foreign Minister Walid al-Mu'allim with the foreign ministers of Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Libya, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar for consultations on ways to confront the ongoing Israeli aggression and massacres. The foreign minister stressed to his counterparts the need to mobilize Arab energies to reach an immediate and unconditional cease-fire and make efforts with the international community to set up an international investigation commission into the crimes that Israel has committed, especially the second Qana massacre. The foreign minister also met on (7/30) with the heads of Arab and foreign [non-Arab] diplomatic missions accredited to Syria to inform them of the Syrian position toward the Israeli aggression on fraternal Lebanon. He expressed Syria's condemnation of the brutal Israeli aggression on

Lebanon, its full solidarity with Lebanon, and its full readiness to provide everything that would support Lebanon's steadfastness and alleviate its suffering as a result of the continuing Israeli aggression and siege. Al-Mu'allim stressed the need to give utmost priority to an immediate and unconditional cease-fire in Lebanon. He stressed that the massacres that Israel has been perpetrating against innocent civilians in Lebanon for three weeks, the latest of which was the Qana massacre, are war crimes according to international humanitarian law. This, he said, requires joint international efforts to establish an international investigation commission into this massacre and the other crimes that Israel has committed against defenseless civilians in Lebanon. The foreign minister warned against political proposals on the international stage which seek to give Israel what it has failed to obtain militarily. He asserted the need for concerted Arab and international efforts to put an end to the Israeli aggression and hold Israel responsible for its disastrous consequences.

Papers also reported that Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu-al-Ghayt visited Damascus (7/30) on a brief visit that lasted a few hours, during which he met with President Asad and conveyed a message from President Mubarak regarding developments in the region. The visit was part of Egypt's ongoing efforts and deliberations to contain the deteriorating situation in Lebanon and intensify moves toward an immediate ceasefire.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Qana: a story of flagrant terrorism. President Asad: An act of state terrorism that reflects Israeli savagery. Over 57 persons killed, including 42 children. Vice-President al-Shara: Full solidarity with Lebanon. Speaker of the People's Assembly al-

Abrash: Brutal massacres and barbarian aggression. Prime Minister Otri: Unlimited readiness to offer aid. Lebanese President: We will not succumb to Israeli terrorism. Speaker of Lebanese Parliament Berri: Conditions of prisoners swap have changed. Lebanese government: Unconditional ceasefire is required. President Bush doesn't condemn. US Secretary of State Rice is sad! Israeli Prime Minister Olmert: No ceasefire; we need additional two weeks. UN SecGen Annan: The Security Council's authority is at stake" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/31)

"President Asad denounces the new Israeli massacre in Qana in a telephone call with President Lahoud and reviews with Egyptian Foreign Minister Abu al-Ghayt current efforts to curb Israeli aggression" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/31)

"US Spokesman Ereli: Israel partially suspends air raids against Lebanon for 48 hours" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/31)

"With a green light from Rice, Olmert announces continuation of aggression against Lebanon" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 7/31)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Lessons of South Lebanon and Foolish Threats"
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Elias Murad, Chief Editor of government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (7/31): "The ideas that US President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair raised in their joint press conference in Washington on 28 July were strange....

"For a moment, analysts thought Blair was visiting Washington in an attempt to persuade it to seek a cease-fire in Lebanon and find a solution to the tense situation that might lead to a destructive war endangering the security and peace of the region and the world. But it clearly emerged that the British prime minister went further than his ally in his unfair position. He made random accusations and threatened this country and that, without showing any clear sign of responsibility or a desire to

take a step or make an effort to achieve peace....

"The strangest thing is that Bush and Blair saw nothing in the aggression on Lebanon other than Hizbolllah's capture of the two Israeli soldiers, which they considered a terrorist operation. For them, anything that Israel does to bring the soldiers back is justified and part of the anti-terror campaign that the United States claims it has been waging since 9/11. They also labeled every party supporting the Lebanese resistance as a sponsor of terrorism, in a direct reference to Syria and Iran....

"The US president, who blames every problem in the region on terrorism, ignores the fact that terrorism started not on 9/11, but when Israel was established....

"The ideas that President Bush is promoting, such as the deployment of an international force in south Lebanon and the creation of a new Middle East, are exactly the objectives that Israel has failed to realize by force....

"The nervousness that Bush and Blair showed and the threats they made during the press conference were apparently a result of the crisis that the champions of the new Middle East plan are experiencing as the date of the failure and collapse of this plan draws near.... It has become clear to them now that the steadfastness of the resistance fighters and their ability to confront all types of weapons have foiled their plans, ideas, and proposals. In the press conference, therefore, the two allies offered a model of arrogance and haughtiness through the threatening messages they sent. But we call on them to read and comprehend the lesson from south Lebanon, where the military machine is retreating in the face of firm belief in the homeland and readiness to sacrifice for its sake...."

"Advocates of War"

Ahmad Dawwa, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (7/31): "What can be concluded from the press conference of US President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair is that the two leaders like organized killing and destruction so that they can engage in relief work later. Wasn't the Israeli aggression on Lebanon launched with an American green light? Aren't most of the weapons used made in the United States?"

"We wonder how Bush and Blair could give Israel new authorization to proceed with its dirty war against the Lebanese people and provide it with smart bombs and internationally banned weapons while they continue to talk about the suffering of the Lebanese people.... Bush and Blair are no different from a criminal who commits a crime and expresses regret before the judge in the hope he will win some sympathy....

"The conditions that the United States, Britain, and Israel are setting for a cease-fire are more dangerous than the war because they seek to achieve what the Israeli destructive machine has failed to achieve throughout the past days.... Decision-making capitals in world must know that Lebanon cannot bear the consequences of the US agenda in the region, which cannot be realized. The Arab regimes, who thought that Israel would be able to defeat the Lebanese resistance within days, must return to their senses because Lebanon is just the spark, and the fire will reach everyone, and they will be the first."

"American Is Part of the Problem"

Ali Nasrallah, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/31): "The real problem in the region is Israel, sustaining its occupation of Palestine, Lebanon, and the Golan, and its

refusal to implement international resolutions....

"The United States and its unlimited support of Israeli policies of occupation, killing, and aggression is a real part of the problem.... A radical solution to the Middle East conflict begins with the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions, which have languished in drawers for six decades, obstructed by Israeli rejection, the American veto, and Washington's hegemony in the international organization....

"The United States must realize that its efforts to form and deploy international forces to Lebanon to harm Lebanon's sovereignty, rob Lebanon of its right to resist occupation, and enable Israel to make security gains, are nothing but unattainable dreams.... It must realize that the front of rejection and opposition will foil all hegemonic plans that it seeks to impose on the region, no matter what the sacrifices...."

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